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F. 123

GRISELDA:

OR,

LOVE AND PATIENCE.

A Play

IN FIVE ACTS.

BY JOHN WATKINS.

"I'll so offend, to make offence a skill,  
Redeeming time, when men think least I will."

LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY W. STRANGE, PATERNOSTER ROW:

AND SOLD BY ALL BOOKSELLERS.

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1846.

*Price One Shilling.*



The groundwork of this Play is taken from BOCCACCIO's most popular story, superinduced with transpositions as the English drama seemed to require. The writer has been indebted to his friend, the author of *Festus*, for several emendations, which he takes this opportunity of gratefully acknowledging.

CHARACTERS

DOUGLAS JERROLD, Esq.,

To you, Sir, I dedicate this Play, as a token of respect for your Genius, and of gratitude for the favourable opinion which has given me confidence to lay the work before the Public. Hoping the world may long be humoured with those Hogarthian Strokes of Wit and Wisdom—"frosty but kindly"—by which you have so happily distinguished your name,

I remain,

Dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

JOHN WATKINS.

*Battersea Rise, 1846.*

## CHARACTERS.

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WALTER . . . *King of Mercia.*  
ANSELMO . . . *An Ecclesiastic.*  
SWANSCOMBE . . . *An Aristocrat.*  
EARL BIDDULPH . . . *An Old Lord.*  
EDWIN . . . . *His Page.*  
GREENBOLE . . . . *A Woodman.*  
BURGESS . . . . *Spokesman of the People.*

COUNTESS TREWINE . *Wife of Biddulph.*  
WINIFRED . . . . *Her Daughter, in love with Edwin.*  
GRISELDA . . . . *Daughter of Greenbole.*  
ALICE . . . . *Her Infant Daughter.*

*Lords, Commoners, Attendants, &c.*

SCENE. *Mercia.*

*An interval of two or three years between the second and  
third Acts.*

# GRISELDA.

## ACT I.

### SCENE 1. *A Room of State.*

*Enter SWANSCOMBE and ANSELMO.*

SWANS. The king comes here to sit for justice ;  
I have a plea—but much I doubt the issue.

AN. What plea is yours ?

SWANS. Do you not think, my friend, it were but just  
That our nobility, won by much toil,  
Should, at our death, descend upon our heirs ?  
For mine own part, I would not strive for honour,—  
It's lustre would seem dim, not to outlive  
My own poor life, but cast upon my coffin,  
Sepulchrally extinguish'd, my name left  
And dearest issue, bare as I began  
To win it o'er, as though I ne'er had toil'd.  
It strikes at honour's self—makes it a prize  
Not worth the cost.

AN. 'Tis very true—and yet what hope of justice,  
What bounty may nobility expect  
From our too popular and self-ruled king ?  
He reigns not for the throne—much less the altar :  
He reigns but for the people—so he says !  
To them he sacrifices all—and who  
This most inveterate humour shall control ?  
There is no hope save one.

SWANS. And what is that ?

AN. Would he but marry !



SWANS. He'll never marry.

AN. No—not at our request : the way to win him  
Is by the people.

SWANS. Likely the people will play for us !

AN. Hark you my lord—

I've been among the people—urg'd to them  
What pity 'twas our king should live unmarried  
And heirless die, leaving none like himself.  
Moved by my words, hither they come to-day  
To press him on this point.

SWANS. But how are we advantaged by his marriage ?

AN. Content you there !

Let but the crown become hereditary  
Your coronets must follow. But he comes.

*Enter KING, who seats himself on his throne. Lords Temporal and Spiritual range on either side. Commoners in front. EDWIN, BURGESS.*

KING. Nobles and people—

Life's heirs with me and lords of Mercia's land !  
Time, whose still sailing prow pierces the future,  
Gives us the present hour to pass with it,  
And then be left and lost, while vaward Time  
Still onward sweeps, scything all things for death.  
And shall we lie as we had never lived ?  
Our names as silent as our unknown dust ?  
Or shall Fame's trumpet sound our deathless lives  
In the world's ever-verberating cave ?  
And what shall be the tale ?—or good or ill ?  
We must determine that :—if ill the record,  
Posterity will rake our seedless ashes  
And black Reproach blow them about—if good,  
Why we shall sleep embalm'd with precious praise  
That makes even death dream of a happy life,  
And re-productive good will feed our souls  
Till they grow giants in their joy immortal.  
*This* be our stamp on Time ! For this I'd reign !  
Not to sow curses harvested in hell—  
Nor, like the shower that falls upon the sea,  
Shed fruitless bounty—but, with counselled acts,  
Bar evil out, and ope the gate to good :  
Guard you from your own selves—my hardest task !—  
And make the meanest mighty in our care.  
Industry, that associates with the sun,  
Shall rest secure, refreshed with its own fruits,  
And this our reign reign in succeeding times.  
What say you, lords ?



AN. My liege,  
Since Providence has pick'd you for our king,  
And therein shewn its love to us, for sure  
It chose a blessing for our land in you,  
I first would thank the Heavens—laud be to God !—  
And next, in name of our most holy father,  
Confirm the Church's gift of this your crown  
By thus anointing you.

KING. What unguent's this?—'tis oil of Rome !—I'll none on't—  
The people's voice appointed me their king.

AN. Then was the people's voice the voice of God !

KING. If so, so be it.

AN. And 'tis God's will I speak to thee, O king !

KING. God speaks to me direct by my own conscience,  
The which, I thank him, does not disapprove me.  
The people too, with outward, general voice,  
Confirm aloud this whisperer within.

AN. Yet hear God's minister, ordain'd of God,

KING. Wherefore art thou ordain'd ?

AN. To say what thou should'st do, O king !

KING. Aye, to traverse the people's will and God's  
To further thine—no more !—stand back, sly priest !  
Heav'n needs no instruments like thee or me  
To minister to Him whose will is fate.

My lords take you no check from this—approach !

Nobles whom worth, not birth, ranks nearest us,  
Advance !—speak freely what you would have done.

SWANS. Decree, O king ! our honours do descend  
Hereditary to our first-born sons.

KING. You would not so degrade your honour'd selves  
To make high honour, which is ever won,  
A thing of sale, or gift, or heritage !  
If so, ye love not honour for itself.  
Who would not owe his title to his merits ?  
Honour by law were but dishonour then—  
Unjust, besides, to true deservers.

SWANS. A parent may bequeath his wealth, O king !  
Why not his honours ?

KING. What comes of wealth bequeath'd ?—too oft 'tis spent  
In idle shame—so would it be with honour.  
Bequeath your bright example, lords, for that  
Is best of legacies.

SWANS. Alas !

Our sons may not be framed to follow us,  
So all we've gain'd were lost, dead with ourselves.

KING. And better so than that your honour'd names  
By sons degenerate should be borne to shame.  
Besides, shall one, though first, perchance not best,  
Engross and shut his better brethren out.

Rank is a prize for free competitors.

How say'st thou, priest?—would'st thou thine holy office  
Thy son should heir?

AN. If none were worthier ! but on doubtful chance  
I would not set the Church's weal at stake.

Ah no ! let the most able rise to serve her.

KING. Hear that, lord Swanscombe ! rightly Anselmo judges,  
The Church would gain th' ascendant o'er the State  
Were one by merit serv'd—by birth the other.  
Speak Commons—let the last be first.

BUR. Not now for justice come we to our king—  
Wrong is unknown, and right rejoiceth ever :  
Your goodness awes the bad or turns them good,  
And all your people live at peace with all.  
But you are mortal—that is their only grief.

KING. Why all must die—we flourish but to fade,  
Or change this being for a better.

BUR. But where another Walter shall we find ?

KING. Choose from among your nobles here.

BUR. Had you an heir, most like he would be like you,—  
We will our king to marry.

SWANS. Let us say aye to that.

AN. It is the people's voice, my lord, the voice of God—  
Surely you will consent.

KING. Marry ! The cares of family will cark those joys  
That my free, light and unencumbered spirit  
Now feels when on my steed I mount, and, bird-like,  
Fly on the out-speeded wolf like fate ;  
Or watch my falcon's flight, that with a glance  
I follow as he bears the herne to earth.  
No, my steed must lose his swiftness, stall'd—  
My hawk moult on the mew'd up, owl-like perch,  
And I lose heart and health, chain'd down  
By the dull yoke of wedlock.

BUR. This answers not but you must marry.

KING. I am married—the husband of the State—  
My bride the commonweal !—would you divorce us ?  
Have you no dread a wife or family  
May draw me from you to be only theirs ?  
Or that their nearness may obstruct your view,  
Or cause me look with distant eye on you,  
Leaving your weal to negligence or guile ?

BUR. An heir ! an heir !—give us an heir !

KING. You tire of me and want a new young king.

BUR. We want a second Walter to succeed.

KING. The change you seek might bring a change on all,  
And what would be my feelings should I find  
My freedom slaved to shame or to annoyance !

BUR. A queen !—a prince !—long live king Walter !

KING. Whom should I marry?

BUR. We leave the choice to you, O king !  
Doubtless in that, as in all else, your wisdom  
The most will shine.

AN. Might we presume to name a bride, my lord,  
The lady Winifred appears most meet.

SWANS. Aye, she's of gentle blood.

KING. Not therefore gentle !  
I yield me to you, yield to me in this,  
That I choose for myself—none else to blame—  
And you receive my choice as 'twere your own,  
Whoe'er she be—else you shall rue the day  
That makes me wed at your desire, not mine.  
For since I must be noosed, I'd choose the rope  
That is to tether me.

ALL. Agreed ! agreed !

KING. Attend me here to-morrow—go with me ;  
I'll take a bride in presence of you all.

BUR. Hurrah !—go, let us get rejoicings ready.

(*Exit. KING, followed by BUR. and others, with huzzas.*)

AN. (*Aside and exit.*) A wife ! woman is a religious thing,—  
Through her I'll rule him for the Church's good.

EDWIN. (*Manet.*) Whom will he marry ?  
I never heard that he affecteth any.

Doubtless the first and fairest in the land.  
My Winifred is she !—he may not think so :  
He seem'd to slight her, as not worth his thought ;  
Or thinks he of another ?—I know not.

I could have braved him for his seeming scorn.  
Yet should he love with me, what chance is mine ?

A king my rival !—I but a poor page !  
I would not to be king prove false to her ;  
Nor to be queen would she to me, I think.  
But I must fear until our loves are married.  
The haughty countess—she's my greatest dread.  
Her pride runs thwart my love to bar it out,  
And Winifred is filial—much I fear.

(*Exit.*)

## SCENE 2. A Room.

*Enter EARL BIDDULPH and the COUNTESS TREWINE.*

TRE. Why were you not at Court to-day, old man ?

BID. Old man ! and will you call me old ?

TRE. Aye, are you not so ?

BID. But that's no reason you should call me so,—  
When truth is an offence I'd have you flatter.  
Besides, there needs not you—enough reminds me—



Grey hairs, weak eyes, and trembling limbs,—yes, yes ;  
But you to tell me so, is worst of all.

TRE. Why, then, I'll call you young—a second child.

BID. Worse still—better be silent.

TRE. Then answer me, why went you not to Court?

BID. I was too late.

TRE. Aye, you are ever so—behind in all—  
Poor age-struck fool ! lost to attendance.

BID. 'Tis true my youth is gone—my strength has left me.  
Oh, what we lose with years !

TRE. Who could suppose that you were ever young?—  
And strong?—good lack ! 'twas well you married me—  
You got back all you'd lost—got all in me—  
Aye, me, you needed to support your name—  
Yourself had grown too feeble.

BID. I was not feeble, thirty years ago,  
When the red Danes pour'd all their force on Mercia,  
And I, at head of men all like their leader,  
Stemm'd the fierce torrent—turned it from our land,  
And rushing foremost to their wolfish chief,  
I left him not, till with his head I came  
Back to my little band—aye, I did that.

TRE. You talk as you could do such feats again.

BID. Aye, in my country's cause—but no—no, no—  
Age has disarmed me—Time has conquered me,  
That never man could vanquish ; and a woman  
O'ercomes me now with but her talking tongue.

TRE. Past actions will not serve us, but the present.  
You went to Court only to find it gone.  
Where is young Edwin ?

BID. I sent him to attend in place of me.

TRE. What ! make a proxy of your page ! O fie !  
Is't thus you keep our name and title bright ?  
A page to represent Earl Biddulph's house !  
Go make your page a lord, a knight, or squire,  
To cover this disgrace—but where is he ?  
Let him appear to make report.

BID. No ease for an old man with a young wife !  
I must be lacquey to her whims,—well ! well !

*Exit.*

TRE. It was his title, wealth, and not himself—  
I married to be Countess—Countess Biddulph !  
There's comfort in his years—I govern all.

*Enter EDWIN.*

So, sirrah, you attended court to-day,  
And fill'd your master's place, presumptuous boy !  
And yet 'twas best—he is not blind, nor deaf—  
Then make amends—what saw and heard you there ?

EDWIN. Nothing, so please my lady,  
Save that the king will marry.



TRE. Is that nothing?

The very point I've urged him to so long,  
And all in vain—what makes him yield to't now?

ED. The people's wish.

TRE. 'Tis my wish, sirrah! hang the people! marry?  
Why so he shall; whom did they choose for him?

ED. Lords Swanscombe and Anselmo named your daughter.

TRE. They were too forward in't—I thank them not—  
That business is my own; well, what ensued?

ED. He said he'd make free choice, and all agreed.

TRE. He shall not neither: I'll choose a bride for him,  
And Winifred is she—my darling daughter.

Quick, Edwin! haste! hie thee to Winifred—

Tell her I wait her here—why dost not start?

ED. Said you that Winifred shall wed the king?

TRE. Aye, get thee gone—what! here still? art deaf?

ED. Would I were so, so I'd not heard this said.

TRE. Why, how concerns it thee, young malapert?

ED. And must I lose my mistress, my dear mistress!

TRE. Fool! thou'lt serve her still—be still her page—  
Queen's page, varlet!—gay suits shall grace thee.

Begone, or hence for ever.

ED. I go.

(Exit.

TRE. What with the old and young I've much to do.

But, come, the king will marry—marry he shall,

And marry Winifred—my daughter, queen!—ha! ha!

O yes, my Winifred shall bring an heir

To royal Walter's throne.

*Enter WINIFRED.*

Welcome life's darling! art thou in health?

Thy spirits good? I have a task for thee.

WIN. A pleasant one, I know, good mother.

TRE. Why so it is; a short and happy task,  
That makes thy after days all holidays.

WIN. O pray, what is't?

TRE. To get a husband.

WIN. One I shall love?

TRE. No fear of that.

WIN. But one will love me too?

TRE. He cannot choose—who is there is thine equal?  
Best born, most beautiful, and young withal!

Why thou art she beyond all question of't.

WIN. But who is he?

TRE. What think'st thou of the king?

WIN. The king!

TRE. Aye, can there be a better?

WIN. I feel a reverence for the king; but that's not love.

TRE. I care not what thou feel'st—love him or not,  
If he loved thee, methinks that were enough.  
How now ! is not the king all thou could'st wish ?

WIN. More, much more.

TRE. So much the better, so thou mak'st him thine !  
Get on thy best attire, spare not for cost,  
Use all my jewels, added to thy own.  
Look ! that in wit and beauty thou art chief.  
His mind is yet unfix'd, and thou must fix it.  
In this love-knotted hair let roses twine,  
As though they grew there ; in this hand a bud,  
Unblown as thou,—festoon thy frock with flowers.  
Let pearls hang here, no purer than thy teeth.  
A rosary of jet coil round thy neck  
To show its whiteness ; bracelets clasp thy arms,  
Tight as the grasp of love, and round thy zone  
Let diamonds sparkle their delight to gird thee.

WIN. You make me think there is a dance to night.

TRE. 'Tis very like, if so, lead thou it off,  
With him thy partner ne'er to part again,—  
Make it a dance for life ; for should he summon  
All love and beauty there, thou must be queen of't.  
Therefore, my girl, hold fast the hand he gives thee.

WIN. What would he think of me ?

TRE. That not another such is out of Heaven.  
Let him but once grasp this dear hand in his,  
He'll never let it go again, I'll warrant !  
Be sure he feels thy heart within thy hand,  
And let thy soul shoot through thine eyes at his,  
Then, though thou keep thyself away, he'll have thee—  
He'll run thee down, nor can'st thou help it, Win.

WIN. You terrify me, mother.

TRE. Poor coward !  
Fail to get him, I care not who thou hast—  
A page, or any one—thou'rt nought to me.  
Remember, Win., all is at stake to-night.  
Thou'rt his, or mine no longer.

(Exit.

WIN. How can my mother choose a husband for me ?  
She looks with pride, but I with only love.  
Alas, my heart is lost—'tis gone already,  
And great indeed should be my Edwin's love  
To compensate what I must lose for him.  
A king !—my mother—myself—but oh, not him !  
Oh no, not Edwin.

*Enter EDWIN.*

ED. Dear Winifred ! thou conjur'st with my name—  
Pronounced by thee, how potent is the spell !  
But thou look'st sad.

WIN. My mother makes me fear the king.

ED. Why so? none fear, all honour him,  
He is so good and brave.

WIN. And art not thou?

My mother's breath hath ruffled me a little;  
But now 'tis past, for thou art here, my Edwin.

ED. Oh 'tis too much of joy to hear love's music  
Uttered by beauty thus; richer am I  
Than is the king without thee. Dearest sweet!  
Thou hast the blueness and beauty of Heaven  
In those soft eyes, the light of Heaven is there,  
And all its love. How thou dost bolden me!  
Now, like St. George, I could confront a dragon,  
And all for love of thee. Fear not, my flower!  
Thy haughty mother seems beneath me now.  
The king himself not half so proud as I.  
Oh what a cue I'm in to dance—we fly!

(*Exeunt.*)

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## ACT II.

### SCENE 1. *A Cottage.*

#### GRISELDA.

GRIS. Another Morn, the last new birth of Time!  
I rise with her to live the foremost life;  
For see, she brings fresh graces to reward  
Those that salute her earliest. Oh, sweet morn!  
Heaven's handmaid thou that parts night's dusky hair,  
And with salubrious breath dost sweep away  
Her vapours foul, to clear the earth for sunshine.  
Now thy attendant star hath done its vigil,  
And the veil'd vestal modestly retires:  
For lo! the sun comes forth and day begins.  
The birds sing those same matins Heav'n did teach,  
When first Creation painted this green world.  
The lark, whose topping spirit leads the choir,  
Soars highest up to make himself first heard.  
How earnest in his praise—a few glad notes  
Reiterated o'er and o'er untir'd.  
Ah, happiest they who likest him can live,  
To wake with light, and drink the watery air,  
Catching the sun ere he descends to earth.  
E'en now his upland beam walks down the vale,



Chasing the gloom before him : gentlest glory !  
That not alone the trees, but smallest blade  
Gladdens with its own green, nor misses ought.  
Thou that dost make our river flow in gold,  
And now dost tend my sheep, whose woolly fleece,  
Wash'd by the holy dews, thy white beams bleach,  
The while they crop their bed of foodful flowers.  
But hark ! my father comes—his morning voice  
Vies with the throstle whistling as he walks.  
Oh blest are we that have no wish save one,  
But that I must not breathe save in my prayers.

*Enter GREENBOLE.*

GREEN. Here, Grissell—here are faggots to serve us for fuel till the next I bring. Prithee, unload me—and what hast thou for breakfast?

GRIS. Ewe milk and bread and cheese.

GREEN. And what else ?

GRIS. The venison that Walter the woodman brought us.

GREEN. Ah, I thought it would come at last—that Walter is a good youth—dost thou know he help'd me to fell this tree—but I can tell him of a deers' track I found this morning. Ah, I would thou had'st him to take care of thee when death lays me beside thy mother.

GRIS. Shall I lose both ? why might not Walter be a good son to you, as well as husband to me ?

GREEN. Faith ! I know not why—we shall see.

GRIS. Hark ! how the bells ring.

GREEN. That's because the king's married to-day.

GRIS. Is he ?

GREEN. Aye marry is he !—Walter told me so—he knows everything.

GRIS. He promis'd to marry me the same day the king married ; do you think he will keep his word, father ?

GREEN. I don't know—mayhap the king will never marry. He told me he should be at the king's wedding.

GRIS. Oh, let me go ! I long to see thee king, he is so good, and I shall see the queen, no doubt she will be very beautiful.

GREEN. Ah, it is Walter thou wishest to see, sly rogue ! what can'st thou want to see the king for ?

GRIS. Only to say that I have seen him.

GREEN. 'Twill unsettle thee—thou wilt not care for Walter when thou see'st the king.

GRIS. Father, were I the wife of Walter, I should not envy the king's bride.

GREEN. Well, fetch the water, and thou may'st go to the wedding.

GRIS. (*Going, returns*) Father, there is such a gallant company coming down the forest glade ! what can they want at our poor hut ?



GREEN. For my life the venison that Walter gave us—they have smelt it out—I'll in and hide it. *[Exit.]*

GRIS. Nay, but the man who comes foremost is Walter himself, though he is so fine I did not know him at first. Ah, he has come to marry me, and the sun shines on purpose; but how meanly I appear.

*Enter* KING, SWANSCOMBE, ANSELMO, EDWIN, BURGESS, &c.—*(two females with a bundle)*.

KING. Griselda! where is thy father?

GRIS. He is within, sir.

KING. Call him hither.

GRIS. Father!

*Enter* GREENBOLE.

GREEN. What want you here?

KING. Thy daughter, father! for my wife.

GREEN. If thou be Walter the woodman she is thine,  
But not if thou art king.

KING. I am both Walter and the king.  
Griselda, wilt thou have me for a husband?

GRIS. If it so please you, lord.

KING. Thou wilt in all obey, lowly as now?

GRIS. I have no will but yours.

KING. Behold my bride! receive her as a princess.

Priest, in the name of God, conjoin our hands.

It was your wish, O people, lords and commons,

That I should wed—you left the choice to me.

I've done your will, and here I make my choice,—

Behold King Walter's queen!

GRIS. My lord,

I'm all unworthy to be made your wife;

Fitter am I to be a woodman's mate

Than yours; pardon me, lord, I knew you not.

KING. Thou'lt ever find me Walter in my love,

And glad am I that in a woodman's guise

I made discovery of thy hidden worth.

A primrose thou that scarce the sun could see,

Peeping with modest eye from this thy covert

With nought to neighbour thee but violets, cowslips,—

Whose natal tie, fix'd to this shady spot,

Kept all thy sweetness to thyself alone:

Transplanted now, with me thou'lt flourish high

In the gay garden of our kingdom's court.

GREEN. My daughter is no match for you, my lord,—

Go seek an equal, or be Walter still.

KING. To live with her I'd be a woodman ever,

A forester, a shepherd, and, with her,

Lead forth her sheep from fold as I was wont,  
 Talk to her the while they fed ; guard 'em from wolves,  
 And tend her with like care as she her lambs :  
 Save her from toil, and share my wallet with her ;  
 Get her the flowers and fruits that earliest come ;  
 Weave her a garland for her sheephook trim,  
 Of silver hawthorn and gold-dusted palm ;  
 Pipe her love's tender ditties, while she sung 'em ;  
 Build her a bower ; live nature-wise with her,  
 And make my careless kingdom in the sunshine.  
 Nor should'st thou, father, lack a son's young strength ;  
 But this not needs—better I lift her up,  
 And give my people to her for a flock ;  
 Exchange her sheephook for a crowned sceptre,  
 Her grassy seat beneath the greenwood tree  
 For an o'er-canopied and purple throne ;  
 Therefore, Griselda, doff this rustic garb,  
 And don the robes these handmaids bring for thee.  
 Go with them and thy father in.

(*Exeunt* GRIS., GREEN., &c.)

What say you to my wife, your queen ! my lords ?

SWANS. Faith ! I know not what to say. Is this the enchanted castle in the forest—this the fair princess you have rescued—this her dragon-sire ? You mock us, my lord,—you are not serious—you have presented us with a May-game this fine morning.

KING. Thou dost revere the rich, but I the poor.  
 I take more pride in gath'ring from the ground  
 This humble flower to wear it in my bonnet,  
 Than were she ancestry's most lofty plume.  
 Besides, hath not Anselmo made us one ;  
 Those who love me will shew't by honouring her.

AN. My lord, I cannot think the Heavens will bless this match—'tis too unequal—choose a worthier mate.

KING. Where shall I find her ?—would I were worthier,  
 More equal then would be our union.

AN. We'd have you choose a greater lady.

KING. Great ladies stoop not to obedience.  
 And pray what is't that makes them greater ?—beauty ?  
 Who hath more ?—virtue ? where so much ?—what else ?  
 Are not all other riches poor to these ?  
 And these, a bride's best dowry, are Griselda's.

AN. The eagle pairs not with the dove, my lord.

KING. No, rather preys upon it—I protect.  
 And what but outward signs of greatness lacks she ?  
 These I can give her, to these she has a claim  
 Or I have none,—what say you, commoners ?

BUR. You honour us, my lord, to take a mate  
 From one of us—one of the people's stock ;

The first are you that thus have pleased the people!  
May happiness reward your honest choice,  
And give our hearts an heir.

KING. I've chosen this poor girl because she's poor  
And needed a protector—nor for that—  
But 'cause I found her rich in real worth,  
And all unknown her worth, e'en to herself,  
Reveal'd to me alone to bless me with.  
Wealth wins its owner worship from the world,  
However poor in worth—worth without wealth  
Goes still unprized—lucky if not oppress'd.  
Wealth can protect itself, or buy protection.  
It were superfluous did wealth, wealth marry.  
I make a poor one, rich—endow with power  
One who is weak—exalt a humble one—  
Reward and honour, honest truth and virtue—  
Make her my own and yours—behold her now !

*Re-enter GRISELDA robed as queen—all applaud.*

KING. Sees't thou, Griselda, what was due to thee,  
To thy own native worth that lies within—  
These lords pay to thy dress, this outward show ?

GRIS. I mark it well, my lord.

KING. Set forward !—to the palace !

GRIS. Yet let me take one last look at my cottage !  
And must I leave my birthplace, and life's home ?

KING. Beloved wife !—thy being join with mine—  
Home thyself here in this most happy heart !

GRIS. Oh ! I have loved the flowers that grow round here  
As they my sisters were—and little birds,  
How they will miss my call !

KING. Nay, but we will revisit oft these scenes,  
And live our days of courtship o'er again.

GRIS. The buds that blossom to bring fruit for me  
Must drop it on the ground—but, oh ! my father !  
Who shall prepare his food, his rest, his hearth ?

KING. Will he not with us ?

GRIS. No, my good lord, you may transplant the flower  
But not the tree—but see ! the good man comes.

*Enter GREENBOLE.*

GREEN. Go, my Griselda, daughter ! woodland-dove !  
They have transform'd thee so, I scarce can know thee.  
Soar in the sky where shines the hot clear sun.  
But shouldst thou find the glare oppress thee, child,  
Stoop through the trees and nestle here once more,  
Here in this cool and kindly nook of peace.



Go ;—I will keep thy russet dress for thee,  
For I do think ere long to see thee back.

GRIS. Whether I sit pavilion'd in a palace,  
The consort of a king—or 'neath this thatch  
Spin near my humming bees—still be my mind  
Itself—and I be patient ever.

KING. Amen to that.

GRIS. Dear father tend my flock—I'll come and help  
At yeaning and at shearing time.

KING. Lead on !—march we to bridal rites.

(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE 2. *A Room.*

WINIFRED, EDWIN.

WIN. And has the king releas'd our love from fear ?  
Oh ! tell me all.

ED. 'Twas thus : We went—he led the way through paths  
That cleft the meadows—over brooks and stiles  
Thro' feeding pastures, growing fields of corn,  
Fenc'd by the stalks that lined our way like guards,  
Till in the solemn shade of an old wood  
We enter'd deep—startling the solitudes  
Where wild doves brood in undisturbed love.  
The woodlark was the genius of the spot,  
Chaunting his hymns unseen. There Druid bards  
Had gather'd mystic wreaths from sacred oaks.  
At length, o'er mossy beds of wild-wood flowers,  
We raught a well, bottom'd with drowned leaves—  
A patch of bluest heaven that shew'd the trees,  
Ever at gaze to see themselves skied there.  
In this sweet spot, where Naiads might have dwelt,  
A woodnymph stood—her pail set down beside her—  
Gazing at our approach ; she blush'd and turn'd,  
And, like a startled bird, had flown away,  
But that our king, with uttering but her name,  
Lured her, as from midflight a falcon, to his hand.

WIN. This was the bride—what like is she ?

ED. Her towering brow shows like the crescent moon  
When curtain'd with dark clouds, and her orb'd eye,  
Which frowns or smiles do equally become,  
Beams with soft fire that melts the while it pierces.  
Mind, temper'd with affection, is seen there.  
Her lips, e'en when her tongue is mute, do speak—  
Oh ! form'd are they to pour her thoughts like wine.  
Such is Griselda, whom the king bade call  
Her father forth—then did we hear a voice



A nightingale would borrow when in love.  
A wicket open'd in their little cot,  
Which stood embower'd, as 'twere one woodbine bush,  
A tall tree at each end, and flowers around  
That look'd as glad to grow near such a home.

WIN. Oh! thither joyfully could I retire  
With only thee. But what came after this?

ED. In brief the match was made—we witness'd it,  
And thus our king was married.

WIN. Did not the change confound her with its strangeness?

ED. Oh! no—'twas wonderful to see how soon

The peasant girl became a perfect queen.  
Her nature's nobleness taught her the art.  
Dignity overtopp'd her like her crown—  
A starry crest as heaven sat on her head.  
Her brow of palest purity shone clear,  
Save some small speckled kisses of the sun.  
Her jewell'd arms, as if they ne'er had toil'd,  
Shew'd ivory stems, beaded with ruby buds.  
Her stature like the pillar of a temple.  
A calm endurance shaded her strong glance  
Which would have awed but for her winning lips.  
Her steps treaded the earth as 'twere her globe,  
And when she spoke, sense rode on music.  
She seem'd to condescend to be a queen,  
And all in love for him, who, on his part,  
Seem'd prouder of her than his royalty.

WIN. Hush!—my mother comes.

*Enter TREWINE and BIDDULPH.*

TRE. Married a forest girl!—a daughter o' the woods!  
A slip of oak!—an old woodcutter's chip!—  
It cannot be, and she to be our queen!

Dotard!—thou playst the fool to make me mad.

BID. Nay, but 'tis true—young Edwin saw it all.

TRE. What!—he, too, in the plot to circumvent me!

O! that I had a husband worth the name,

Or she a father—this insult had not been.

'Tis done to spite me and to wrong my child.

A king marry a slave!—'tis sacrilege!

A vile inversion of his dignity.

Why was he not prevented?—where were all?

Swanscombe, Anselmo, the people—thou, boy?

That did not this prevent. I would have done't.

ED. What could we do?

TRE. Nothing, it seems, no more than stocks of trees.

And you, poor pout! that look so meek upon't;

You that with rage ought to rush hence to them  
And tear her from him.

WIN. I am well pleas'd to be pass'd by for her.

TRE. Poor child of humbleness !—thy father's child,  
No child of mine—thy father's there  
Who with drawn sword should have oppos'd this wrong,  
And forc'd the wronger with its point to right us.

BID. This foolish rage will make us all be laugh'd at ;  
'Tis but a fancied wrong—no wrong at all.  
She cares not for the king—nor he for her.  
Why should you care ?—no more than I, forsooth.

TRE. The less you care the more must be my care—  
Mine to uphold the honour of our house—  
Earl Biddulph leaves it to his page.

ED. Nay but, my lady, Swanscombe, who but laugh'd  
To see the king's most whimsical, rare choice,  
Was frown'd to seriousness—Anselmo chid—  
The people were right glad, and, sooth to say,  
I could not choose but join them in their joy.

TRE. Didst thou ?—begone, then !—and go all of ye !

(*Exeunt all but TREWINE.*)

What shall I do ? the king is mad—a fool !  
Prefer a shepherdess to Winifred !  
Oh, how he hath disgrac'd us—more himself !  
He cannot love her long—his mood must change  
For some new lune—he *shall* have Win.—let's see !

*Re-enter EDWIN.*

Now, boy ! what dost thou seek ?

ED. So please you, my lady, Lords Swanscombe and Anselmo  
would speak to you.

TRE. Bid them come in.

(*Exit EDWIN.*)

. . . . Familiar spirits they  
Whom I must set to work—welcome, my lords.

*Enter SWANSCOMBE and ANSELMO.*

SWANS. Your servant, lady.

ANSEL. We come to offer consolation to you.  
This sad affront, an injury is to all,  
And makes us sympathize.

TRE. What consolation is there but revenge ?

SWANS. It is a slight east on nobility.

ANSEL. I look'd the king was dutiful—a son  
Would have espoused a daughter of the Church.

SWANS. I look'd our queen should be a lady.

TRE. I look'd for honour to high birth.

AN. All have been disappointed—but despair not.

The king's most awkward popularity  
Stands in our way the most.

SWANS. This marriage is our greatest bar.

AN. I'll move that bar—for list to me, my friends,  
It is illusion all—a match of love—

Now nought so strong to conquer love but pride.

Rouse we his pride—stir up the king in him—

And by-and-by he'll look with other eyes,

Put this low thing away, and take a loftier bride.

TRE. That were, indeed, revenge !

AN. Aye, and redress—for Winifred shall win.

SWAN. I'll do my part.

TRE. And I.

AN. Come, I'll instruct you ! Out of our despair  
Hope shall arise to turn this foul to fair.

(*Excunt.*)

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## ACT III.

### SCENE 1. *The Court.*

KING, SWANSCOMBE, ANSELMO, and Others.

KING. You all do know that, when a batchelor,  
My leisure days were passed in hunting, hawking,  
And those wild sports wherein peace mimics war.

And thus contented I had liv'd my life,

Had you been so content ;—but you were not !

You press'd me to a change—I was to marry—

Give up my horse, my hawk, my hound, and you,

And take a wife to couple—tether'd, yoked :

Domesticate myself like some tame pet—

Turn nursery-man and breed a boy to heir me ;

A lad to be your lord when I am gone ;

Cumb'ring light-hearted singleness with cares.

I did comply, only with this proviso,

That I should choose my wife myself, and you

Receive her as your queen, whoe'er she was.

I made my choice—a woman for a man !

Wife for a husband !—a queen for a king !

A peasant's daughter royal as a king's.

But you have broke your trust to murmur at her—

The more since issue she hath born to me.

Come, speak out, lords !—what is your grievance ?



SWANS. My lord !

A choice befitting you and us we look'd for ;  
But you did mock our hopes with a churl's child,  
Beneath whose russet cloak you did discern  
Virtues it hid from us : her you did marry,  
And making her your wife, made her our queen.  
Alas, she wanted blood, and pity 'tis,  
That fate, which bless'd her with all nature's gifts,  
Denied her that, the current stamp of all,  
Without whose indefinable assay  
All else is fortuneless vulgarity.

AN. As much of beauty as Griselda hath,  
Yea, virtue too, you might have had with blood.  
Kings would have leagued with you—the fairest princess  
Had tied with you a rose to bind your kingdom,  
In kindred strength, with the most mighty power,  
Doubling our nation's arm.

SWANS. But marrying Griselda, you have made  
Old Greenbole sire of you and your son's grandsire :  
Yes, an old woodman's grandchild may heir Mercia !  
What had we done that you should make us bend  
Before this low-born queen ?—and shall our sons  
Bend thus before her issue ?

AN. Thanks to the Heavens that have forbid you heirs,  
And saved your kingdom from a mean descent,  
You have no son ; you have but one poor daughter,  
Who, when time teaches her her birth, will blush,  
Shamed at her parcel-blood—the scoff of lineage !  
And she, poor child, will droop to think how wanting  
To her, to us, and to yourself you've been,  
That gave her such a mother.

KING. No more !  
Griselda ! come—silence these bold defamers—  
Let thy look's lightning strike them dumb for ever.

*Enter GRISELDA.*

GRIS. Call'd you, my lord ?

KING. Aye, wife and queen—hear'st thou what these have said ?  
They bait me for thy birth—our little daughter  
They pity with vile scorn—say I have wrong'd her,  
And wrong'd my throne and kingdom, wrong'd the heavens,  
And all by marrying thee—speak, is it so ?

GRIS. They will not dare to say so in my presence—  
See how they shrink, blasted with their own guilt !  
Yet in my absence they can creep to you  
To slime me with this stuff. Where is the people ?  
How comes it that when this is to be done  
They must be absent, lest they prove a check—



For when Injustice would dictate to kings  
She sends such lords, who shut the people out.

AN. My lord is king, and 'tis for him to rule,  
Not serve, the people, else *they* are the sovereigns.

SWANS. We have but spoken what our wisdom deem'd  
Fittest the royal state and nation's weal.

KING. Kings must not please themselves, but please their people.

GRIS. My lord, I humbly crave your leave and pardon.

I am your wife—their queen!—you made me so:

'Twas all your doing—all for love of me,

For so you said, and entire love of you

Made me consent.

You have been hitherto a most dear husband;

Nor do I think that ever discontent

Would come to me from you—never to you from me—

Though this our concord may breed envious discord

In mean malignant minds, whose poison'd tongues

Would pierce between our hearts to sever them,

And venom our affections. See, my lord!

And will you hear them?

KING. I am a king, Griselda, and their voice

Must listen to, though discord be its music.

What is it you would say?

AN. We would ask pardon if our love for you

Has been so bold as to offend the queen.

GRIS. I see whose bow has shot these shafts; but patience!

My lord, I would you had not been a king;

But, since you are one, do your royal will!

I am but what you made me—yours to mar.

KING. Why wert thou born so low, or I so high?

Either I must resign my crown or thee—

My subjects will it.

GRIS. Me!—let it be me!—I am but one of 'em;

But 'tis not for your people but these lords,

Who fain would turn you to a tyrant.

KING. Griselda, go!—I would talk further with them.

GRIS. I obey you.

(*Exit.*)

KING. Now speak more freely.

SWANS. 'Twas a good thing for her to marry you,—

She gain'd thereby—you were the luckless loser.

Did it shew love in her to lessen you?

KING. Swanscombe! thou dost belie her—lord!

She lov'd me when she knew not I was aught

But a poor swain, and was more pain'd than proud

To find I was a king.

AN. You, my dear lord, did raise her up from nothing

And made her all she is—and yet your glory

And kingdom's weal she still would sacrifice—

But thus it is when slaves are mounted high.

KING. She loved me for myself, I say, as I loved her—  
What would you have me do ?

AN. Do yourself right and us and all.  
Divorce this wife and marry one of blood  
Will bring a son to you, a prince, an heir.  
Your kingdom asks this of its king.

KING. Death will too soon divorce us, needs not thou :  
And thou—'twas thou Anselmo bound and bless'd us—  
Wouldst thou the cord thyself didst tie, unloose ?

AN. Aye, 'twas your will I fetter'd you,  
And with your will I'll free you.

KING. Go—I will think of this.

(*Ex. SWANS. and ANSELMO.*)

She gives me no excuse—I cannot do it.  
What ! I that loved her and in pity took her,  
As though a tree should stoop and take a flower  
That grows beneath its shade, and graft it high,  
To blossom 'mid its boughs in sun and air,  
Then cast it off to lie upon the ground,  
Whence no more nourishment it can derive,  
And she must feel, what ne'er she felt before,  
Her humble lot a hard one—'tis most cruel !  
I cruel ! and to her ! for what ? her kindness !  
First perish all and leave me only her !  
Oh ! hard alternative, to lose the state,  
Or her whose love sustains me for the state !  
My daughter, too ! can I unfather her,  
Myself unwive and be a man no more,  
And all to be a king ?—oh ! curse of crowns,  
That sear all sensibility to hardness,  
And wear out nature with your callous weight.  
Yet I will try if majesty has chang'd her.  
The demon pride now rides my heart—come, then—  
Spur me to go through this unnat'ral task—  
Let me not feel a touch of feeling—gall me  
With mine own bitter thoughts—wound me to madness.  
I'll send for her to give my daughter up—  
She shall not breed her like a shepherd's child ;  
But France shall train her in its princely court.

## SCENE 2. *A Room.*

*Enter* EARL BIDDULPH.

BID. This wife of mine is just such a terror to me as I was to the Danes when I was young. Oh ! what it is to have a woman to war with. But mum, she comes.

*Enter TREWINE.*

TRE. How now, lord Chamberlain, mutt'ring to yourself again?

BID. Aye, I was thinking of you.

TRE. What of me?

BID. I was only reck'ning up your perfections that I may not forget them.

TRE. Well, and what are they?

BID. Faith, my memory fails me just now.

TRE. Go to—you are no man.

BID. I begin to think so, and that you are no woman—I wish we could change places.

TRE. Ungrateful man! you want to kill me and get another.

BID. No faith!—one is enough—I'd rather have none at all.

TRE. What! my lord Chamberlain, the court air sharpens your wit—well, and what is the best news?

BID. Sorrowful news! the king will part from his queen.

TRE. Good!—the best I ever heard.

BID. What will become of the poor lady?

TRE. No matter what! she was not born to rule,  
But serve—she'll now be punished for her pride.

BID. Poor lady, she has no pride.

TRE. I have then—no honour where no pride!

BID. Now you will come to court again.

TRE. Aye, when this thing is gone—  
When she who sunk us down is sunk herself,  
And we are rais'd to tread upon her head—  
To take the place she did usurp from us:  
Then I have all I wish—but nought till then.

BID. The king thought fit to raise her, make her his—  
To equalise her with himself—and she  
Is now our lady—lady of the land.

TRE. Queen! our daughter's mistress, too! I'm glad of that;  
For she shall be her servant ere't be long.  
Hence Earl Biddulph and send me Winifred.

BID. I gladly take my leave.

*(Exit.)*

TRE. So far is good—this is a great step gain'd,  
Thanks to myself, lord Swanscombe and Anselmo!  
And now, Griselda, thou most patient spouse,  
Thy patience shall be tried. Content is easy,  
All wants and wishes had ere they are thought,  
And we at top of all—we that were lowest:  
But let blind fortune roll her down to fate,  
Then see where patience and contentment are.  
My daughter!

*Enter WINIFRED.*

WIN. Mother!

TRE. Hast thou ne'er thought, when tiring this Griselda  
Thou wouldst have liked thyself to don the robe



Thou putt'st on her—mistress of honour been,  
And not its maid ?

WIN. Sometimes in frolic I have done so, mother,  
And mock'd myself by queening it in jest :  
It made us laugh—earnest had spoil'd our sport.

TRE. I am in earnest—look thou be so too.  
The king puts her away, tired of his toy,  
And thou must take her place.

WIN. If Walter like not her, I must dislike him,  
In justice, else he ought to dislike me.

TRE. My child, think better of thyself and him.  
Thy birth gives thee a right she never had.  
Thou art my daughter, Win—my high-born daughter !  
And the proud fortune that once spurn'd now woos thee.  
Methinks I see thee Walter's wife and queen ;  
Thou sittest on a throne in royal robes—  
Thy crown blazing with jewels, dazzling us  
Who bow before in worship of thy presence.  
This world, typed with the next, is in one hand,  
The other holds thy sceptre with its dove  
Ready for flight as thou dost point the way  
To the four quarters of the wond'ring world ;  
When straight ambassadors from each appear,  
And pour into thy lap their choicest treasures,—  
Perfumes and cloth of gold, and precious stones,  
Velvet and ermine, and all glorious things.  
On diamonds thou dost set thy silken foot,  
And sov'reign emblems blazon thee all o'er.  
Thy nod commands, thy word is law ; and life  
Receives from thee its sign, and death its seal.  
Doth not the bare idea enchant thee, Win ?

WIN. Ah ! no, dear mother ! see what I desire—  
A woodland cottage, that the Morning finds  
And with its light illuminates and cheers.  
The throstle sings to tell us it is sunshine,  
And swallows twitter on our chimney top,  
Ere yet our hearth sends household incense up.  
Then Health mounts the free hills, while joy and peace,  
Seated beneath the trees, where turtles build,  
Listen their murmur'd love. Such songs and flowers !  
And then there is a green on which we play,  
Keeping up youthful gaiety through life :  
And in our window, see ! a posy stands  
To tell that spring has come—that is my life !  
Oh ! happy innocence, there is thy home !

TRE. The maid is mad—this bleating queen has crazed her—  
Better be banish'd with her to her flock.

WIN. And so I would, for all her power is kindness,  
And serving her is but to please ourselves.

*Enter EDWIN.*

ED. The queen hath call'd for lady Winifred.

WIN. Tell her I come.

TRE. Aye, go in haste, and take thy leave of her—  
Gladly her last command thou shouldst obey.  
In tears for her?—the king shall dry them.

*(Exeunt.)*

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## ACT IV.

SCENE 1. *An Ante-room.*

KING and QUEEN.

KING. Griselda !

GRIS. My lord !

KING. Bring us our daughter.

*(Ex. GRIS.)*

That any child of mine should call her mother !  
What cursed illusion did bewray my sense  
To hide this from me? how love may fool us !  
Would I had seen before as now I see !  
I can no longer own this peasant girl  
As wife—'twas a youth's foolish fit of passion :  
I see it now—her presence doth reproach me—  
I cannot bear it—I must put her off.  
And yet she used no arts—'twas nature all.  
She sought not me—'twas I sought her—pursued her,  
Won her and wived her—now the spell is broke !  
Pride and self-love ! ye slept and warned me not.  
My silly fancy made a goddess of her,  
And now truth shews her but a shepherd lass.  
Would she had borne no issue to me.

*Re-enter GRISELDA with ALICE.*

GRIS. Here is your daughter ; I thank you for her—  
She is mine, too—the mutual bud of both,  
Sprung from our stem to flourish when we fade.

KING. True, she is mine—myself in miniature,  
An elvish Walter ; what, my little me !  
My pretty pippin !

ALICE. Let me sit on your knee and hear you. Now, I can reach you.

KING. Laugh'st thou, my little Lally—wilt thou ride ?

GRIS. She has your eye and brow, my lord.

KING. Wilt walk ?

ALICE. Will you come with me—I've a plaything.

KING. Thou art my plaything, but alas !—

GRIS. You sigh, my lord.

KING. Aye—she must  
Be thine no more, nor mine.

GRIS. Whose shall she be but ours ?—who dares to take her  
Save the great father of us all in heaven ?

KING. I take her.

GRIS. To make her more your own? but fear not that :  
I teach her that—your name was her first word.

KING. Thou dost not well, since she and I must part.

GRIS. I've done all that I could, and only griev'd  
How little all for her was to my wish.

ALICE. I'll not leave mother, but to go to father.

KING. Thou must lose both.

GRIS. She stares with beauteous wonder at your face,  
In doubt if you have spoken truth or no.

KING. My nobles will not thou shouldst have her longer—  
Think not 'tis I.

GRIS. I think it not—yet thank them not.

KING. I give her up ; then why should'st thou refuse ?

GRIS. You did not bear her—it nearly cost my life,  
And yet I blest her with a mother's love.  
She has not miss'd one moment of my care,  
And must she miss it altogether now.

ALICE. Father will not take me from you.

KING. That blood of thine that's in her robs her half  
Of nobleness—sinks her. Better she died  
Than live to know it.

GRIS. Did I hear ?—was't you that spoke ?

KING. Aye, and I mean to do.  
What ho ! earl Biddulph, take hence this child—away.

*Enter BIDDULPH.*

GRIS. You cannot take her—she will not leave me.

KING. Thou lov'st her better than thou lovest me.

GRIS. Oh ! no—no, no !  
She doubled all the love I felt for you ;  
And yet I love her much for she is yours.  
But you I love, more, longer than I live,  
And her with you—oh ! more and more.

KING. This is hypocrisy—let it be proved—  
Obey me—give her up.



GRIS. Will no less sacrifice appease you? Oh!—  
She is of me—I nourish'd her myself,  
And when they weaned her, 'twas like losing life.  
How can I bear to lose her very self?

KING. Lose her or me.

GRIS. Take her—she's yours—do as you list with her—  
I fear to lose you most—only you keep her!

KING. No! she must hence—take her, Earl Biddulph.

GRIS. Whither goes she?

KING. To France, where Charlemagne is king.

ALICE. Father, will you not fight for me?

KING. Aye, my lambkin.

GRIS. But one kiss more, my little Alice.  
Oh! nothing of joy was like my care for thee.  
No sleep like watching o'er thee whilst thou slept,  
And must all end in giving thee to strangers—  
Thee I'd not part with to the kindest nurse?

KING. She must be disposed of, I want a son.

GRIS. Oh! you have power to slay or save, spare her!  
I will not love her—never see her more—  
Love only you—so you will keep her here.  
Biddulph! here take my heart but not my child.

KING. Do as I bid thee, or lose thy life.

BID. 'Tis natural I love my own life most.

[*Exit, with child crying "Father, Mother!"*]

GRIS. Prithee be kind to her as my lord's will.  
She'll lose her senses if not kindly treated,  
And mine are wand'ring sure. Oh! call her back,  
Do you not hear her cries?

[*Gris. rushes after her; king interposes.*]

KING. He who could do this deed could do another—  
Prepare to follow.

GRIS. To follow her! oh, yes! oh, let me go.

KING. No, I will send thee to thy father home.  
It was a wrong I did to take thee from him:  
I will restore thee to him—right that wrong.

GRIS. I not forget I am my father's daughter,  
Albeit your wife—it pleas'd you to advance me,  
Pleases you now I be declined again—  
I'm satisfied.

KING. (*Aside*). What woman is there in the world but she?

GRIS. I've nothing of the queen in my own self,  
Only what you conferr'd and may resume!

KING. (*Aside*.) Down heart! thou wouldst rise up and take her  
side,

But I will keep thee down and try her further.  
Look! here's a dispensation from the church.

GRIS. You have procured it—sued for it?

KING. Aye, give up your marriage-ring.

GRIS. Must I lose you whom I have lov'd with life?  
See you another's?—I to love no other,  
But still but you?—more blest I was with you  
The more unblest without you!—shall I wish  
I ne'er had known you? no, I can't wish that,  
But will endeavour to submit, if so  
You will it.

KING. Woman!—

GRIS. Heart-hitting sound!—you call me wife no more.

KING. I did disgrace my ancestors, who all  
Would so degenerate a son disown,  
That mix'd their royal with a peasant's blood.  
But this I can redeem with some fit match,  
Whilst thou go'st back to thy befitting sphere.

GRIS. I have no title to you but my love :  
I was unworthy you, not you of me :  
Still I must love you—love I cannot part with  
Though love may be no counterpoise for birth :  
As that I lack, your love must lessen you,  
Which not for worlds I'd wish—for can I wish  
You in me disgrac'd—oh! no, then let me go.  
Cast off your clog—here is our wedding-ring.

KING. Now, disrobe thee.

Nothing thou broughtest—nothing shalt take back.

GRIS. Indeed I should not need a sumpter-horse  
To carry my wardrobe or dowry back ;  
But my light-heartedness I take not back.  
In recompense for which give me one cloak  
To cover me from gaze.—

KING. One only, then.

GRIS. It is not Walter !

KING. Come ! unmarry thee—take off these robes.

Poor as I had thee, so shalt thou return.  
Thy father waits thee—I did send for him.  
Nor wife nor queen art thou—thou'rt nothing now  
But poor Griselda.

GRIS. Poor Griselda !

KING. Strip, I say—unrobe thee.

GRIS. Not so, my lord !—not before you thus spaced.  
I've been your wife—borne you a daughter ;—  
I was—but let that pass—I'm still a woman,  
If nothing more, and though, at your behest,  
I give up all—I will not part with shame  
While modesty can cover me.

KING. Keep, then, thy modesty, but begone.

(Exit.)

GRIS. He went nor cast a parting look behind.  
Unmother'd and unwiv'd?—unqueen'd is nothing!  
To lose both at a blow, and he to strike it !

It is not so—where is my child—my daughter?  
Where is my husband? Alice! Walter! gone?  
Are they not here?—alas! where am I?—father!

*Enter GREENBOLE, GRISELDA faints in his arms.*

GREEN. Aye, aye; I knew this would be the end on't—but patience, Grissell. Here are thy clothes—thou shalt bring nought of his away with thee. Come, come.

GRIS. 'Tis Walter's will.

GREEN. Aye, a husband's arm may fail thee, but not a father's.  
(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE 2. *An open space.*

EDWIN, BURGESS, and others.

ED. Strange doings these, my masters—what think you?  
To kill his child and then divorce his wife.

BUR. A monster!—a tyrant!  
We will revenge Griselda and her child;  
We will not have our king a fiend like this;  
But rid the world of such a monstrous wretch.  
How bears she her hard fate? poor Griselda!

ED. They say it was not her desire, but his;  
And now the talk runs he will wed another.

BUR. Will he do so?

ED. Aye, because he will—if we will let him.

BUR. Is our free realm to be so scandalized?  
Which of us forced to give up wife or children,  
But would revolt?  
And shall she suffer—we not help her cause?  
It were to share his crimes—who would do that?  
None!—therefore we will not let him do this.

ED. The pope sanctions it.

BUR. But not the people!

'Tis scandal to our realm—to God and nature.

ED. See where the lady comes—mean as she went.

*Enter GRISELDA and her father.*

BUR. Madam! we will revenge you.

GRIS. Oh, no, to thwart his will were worse than act it.  
E'en this unhappiness is joy to me,  
Since 'tis his will—my own loved Walter's will!  
I have no pleasure but in doing that.  
Do you obey him as you see me do.

ED. A most patient lady—'tis pity of her.

(*Exeunt.*)



SCENE 3. *A Chamber.**Enter KING.*

KING. This vizor that I wear is real to her,  
 And I may change to that I act—be known by't,  
 More than by what I am—character'd thus !  
 Meanwhile, what pain I do inflict on them,  
 And on myself!—wayward perversity !  
 May I not wound her love past healing after ?  
 What pulls my heart-strings so?—my little daughter !  
 She cries within—Griselda too is here—  
 Let me not think of them ;—they *will* be thought of !  
 They haunt me—not for vengeance, but for pity.  
 And are they dead ? Oh heavens ! not so, not so !  
 Then why not here ? I lose them all this while.  
 A painful gash in life this parting makes !  
 My poor child pines to see her father—father ?  
 She shall not want him longer ! nor my wife  
 Lack her fond husband's love.—I torture them  
 And make their love of me the rack.—Down pride !  
 Thou hast put iron armour on my heart,  
 And made it proof to sorrow's sighs, grief's groans ;  
 Conjugal yieldings and parental force.  
 If they should die—who is their murderer ?  
 He who would rather die ten thousand deaths !  
 Oh ! how should I appear before the Judge,  
 With *them* for my accusers. Melt proud heart !  
 Let love bedew thee with its sweetest softness.  
 Thank heaven ! my better nature gains its sway.  
 Swanscombe, Anselmo,—you, ye well-match'd pair !  
 It was a part I could not play!—what, ho !  
 Anselmo ! Swanscombe !—ah ! you fiendish tempters !  
 Devils ! you've robbed me of my wife and child

*Enter SWANSCOMBE and ANSELMO.*

And I am left alone with aching heart,  
 That nought can ease but them—restore them to me !

AN. Why falls your majesty thus foul on us ?  
 A sense of duty should support my lord :  
 And know, the Church that did divorce you twain,  
 Because you were not match'd, and could not pair ;  
 But lived in sin as all unequals do,—  
 The Church will pour its balm to salve the wound  
 She, parted from your side, may there have left ;  
 And, to this end, the Church will find a bride  
 Where no disparagement exists to taunt you.

SWANS. Aye, my good lord, one to redeem your love,  
And make you glad of that which now you grieve at.

KING. What paragon is she?

AN. Young Winifred, Earl Biddulph's beauteous daughter,  
Who in strict justice should succeed Griselda.

SWANS. Aye, there, my lord, there is a mind and person  
Most suited to you—she, though highly born,  
Is but ambitious of humility.

For, being above, her gaze is cast below,—  
Not like those low-born things that plot to rise.

KING. Would she adopt my daughter?

AN. I doubt it not.

SWANS. And see, my lord, how by this step you gain  
The Church to bless you—your lords to thank you,—  
Yea, do promote the welfare of your child,  
To which true parents sacrifice their own;  
And all our interests do in this converge.

KING. Where is this Winifred?

AN. She waits without.

KING. Let her approach, and you retire.

(*Ex. SWANSCOMBE and ANSELMO.*)

This heals all wounds—this satisfies all parties,—  
Why then 'tis well—I'll try this Winifred.

*Enter WINIFRED.*

WIN. Your grace's pleasure?

KING. It is to please thee, Winifred.

WIN. Lords Swanscombe and Anselmo bade me come.

KING. They were my messengers—know'st thou not wherefore?

WIN. No my good lord, I come to learn of you.

KING. Art and nature! is she indeed so witless?

My Winifred! I am a king, and kings sue not,  
They do command—yet will I waive that right  
And deem it most my privilege to kneel,  
And sue thee for thy hand.

WIN. My hand were poor, my lord, without my heart.

KING. But why may not thy heart go with it?

WIN. 'Tis gone already.

KING. Who is so happy as to have thy heart?

WIN. Edwin, my lord.

KING. Would'st thou prefer a page before a king?

WIN. A page I love, before a king I love not.

KING. Thou speakest plain, and wherefore love me not?

WIN. Because I love but one, and cannot love  
More than that one, and would not—Oh, my lord,  
If you esteem me, you will not part us,  
But see us joined.

KING. How ?

WIN. You are a king—Edwin is but a page ;  
But 'tis in you to make him something more,  
And then my mother will not frown on us.

KING. The Countess Trewine ! is she averse to this ?

WIN. Aye, my good lord—you see not through their plot—  
My mother to entrap you, fain would make  
A bait of me :—'twas she spurr'd on Anselmo,  
Who, with Lord Swanscombe, has incited you  
To put away your queen.

KING. O dupe !—victim of knaves !

WIN. 'Tis true my lord—they are no friends of yours  
Who thus would make you hated.

KING. Keep this thing close—let them not know, but all  
Goes as they wish—meanwhile, I'll sort a day  
Shall see thee wedded to thy young heart's love.  
Sees't thou thy influence, Winifred ?

WIN. Ah, have I influence o'er my lord ?  
Then I entreat you, call my lady back,—  
I've served her and I love her.

KING. I thank thee for it.

WIN. Oh my good lord, I know her heart is breaking,  
Howe'er she cloaks it in submission to you.  
She loves you still, but can you love yourself ?  
Or can you think your people will esteem you,  
While to your queen, you so unkindly act ?

KING. My people ! We have been estranged of late—  
What say they of me ?

WIN. They call you tyrant—monster—talk of hurling you  
From that high seat you fill so hurtfully.

KING. How chang'd their voice ! is that the voice of God ?

WIN. They say that since she went—all goes a-crook—  
Oppressions grievous to be borne have bow'd them,  
Which she prevented.

KING. What have we been about ?—abus'd our power ?

WIN. They vow to 'venge her wrongs and daughter's death ;  
For 'tis because she's one of them she's struck,  
And she, not you, reigns o'er them,—has their hearts.

KING. Go Winifred ;

My monitor ! I thank thee for thy warning.  
Go—I will think of all that thou hast said.  
Thou art my better angel.

WIN. Heaven guard you, royal sir.

(Exit.)

KING. Is this retributive ?—what have I done ?  
Since poor Griselda went, what have I lost ?  
Wife, daughter, people's love, and, more than all,  
My happy mind !—sure I've been snared by demons.  
Swanscombe ! Anselmo ! cursed devils, traitors !  
I'll listen ye no more—ye've fill'd my soul



With restless, stinging, torturing, maddening thoughts,  
 To make a fiend of me, and fit me for you.  
 Aye, this I owe to you—to your false friendship.  
 Sting, conscience!—groan, remorse!—wrung nature, weep!  
 Methinks all good and evil spirits tear me.  
 Speed swift, O Time! and bring Griselda back.  
 Where is there one that's like her? none I find,—  
 None will approach me while she is away.  
 This Winifred detests, despises me.  
 Come wife, my heart's ease, come—thou tested goodness!  
 What needed I to make this hard assay?  
 It were enough to flaw perfection's self.  
 And yet once more I'll try her; but no more:  
 If still she holds her constancy, she's mine  
 Henceforth, for ever mine!—honest as fair.  
 Swanscombe, Anselmo, ministers of Hell!  
 Avaunt! while I trace back my steps to justice;  
 No comfort but in that!

(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE 2. *Cottage-inside.*

GRISELDA *Spinning.*—GREENBOLE *at work, mending some rustic implement.*

GREEN. This is as it used to be—and as it ought to be. I could be glad that he sent thee back to me. Would thou hadst never gone. But thou art more settled now. And canst thou content thyself with thy old father's care?

GRIS. Father! you are too good—you do not chide me, Your kindness soothes me, so that I can serve you. Look you! I'll make you such a coat for winter, As the poor sheep had when it wore this wool. Thank Heaven! I've still a father.

GREEN. Aye, had thy husband given thee thy child, he might have kept himself.

GRIS. O while I fed the little life I gave her,  
 How I have kiss'd her tiny hand and gaz'd  
 With eye brimful of smiling, tearful love,  
 To meet her look and mingle hearts with her.  
 Bless her my bud! methinks I see those violets  
 Which sleep was wont to shut, to open more fresh.

GREEN. Nay, come, I did wrong to name her.

GRIS. You did not know her,—pretty innocent!  
 Her every joy I felt and added to't—

Her every sorrow sooth'd and turn'd to joy,  
And I to lose her, and lose her so—but patience !  
'Twas Walter's will.

GREEN. Base villain !

GRIS. Oh curse him not—you make *me* feel accurs'd.  
It is for him I bear the loss of her.  
'Twas Walter's will, not mine—or rather mine,  
Because 'twas his.

GREEN. To see thy grief, makes me to hate him.

GRIS. I would indulge this sorrow—'tis so sweet !  
Oh that my child were buried in this wood,  
That I might sit beside her little grave,  
Though not for worlds would I set foot on it—  
My tears should make all mournful flowers spring there.

GREEN. I would have defied him to death, in defence of my child.

GRIS. O but I love him—'twas his right to change—  
To take from me all he had lent before—  
He has but undone what he did himself.

GREEN. Thy patience puts me out of patience—let's change the  
subject. I've put a new shaft in my axe, and now the woods shall  
ring with my strokes.

GRIS. What cry is that ? methought I heard my child—  
And sure 'tis Walter's footstep.

GREEN. Aye here the tyrant comes.

GRIS. 'Tis he indeed.

GREEN. My axe shall lay him low.

GRIS. You kill me with the stroke.

GREEN. Why did he snare thee, then cast thee off ? and comes he  
now to mock thy misery ? why not let thee grieve in quiet ?

GRIS. You know not why he comes—perchance for good—  
Leave me to speak to him—Oh, go, my father.

GREEN. Well, be it as thou wilt—I'll not be by—  
Lest I revenge thee as a father should.

(*Exeunt.*)

GRIS. O the familiar foot ! the voice of yore !

KING. (*without*) Griselda !

GRIS. My lord.

*Enter KING, attired as a woodman.*

KING. I come to see if thou art settled here.

GRIS. Your are too kind to care for me.

KING. Art thou content and cheerful ?

GRIS. I strive to be so.

KING. I would have thee so.

GRIS. And you, my lord, are you content and cheerful ?

KING. Why no, Griselda, thou wilt not let me.

GRIS. Who, I, my lord? I do not trouble you.

KING. Thy image does—it comes uncall'd, unlook'd for,  
Reviving memory of joys thou gav'st me,  
When love did lead our moonlight walks in youth,  
And thy sweet smile, when thou didst turn thy face,  
Was as the moon looking from Heaven upon me.  
That fickle moon that shone upon our loves  
Has changed since then.

GRIS. The moon that wanes refills again; but you—

KING. May do the same when once this cloud is past.  
I swear this to thee by all thou was't to me.

GRIS. Oh extreme man!

KING. And dost thou love me still?

GRIS. Alas! my life too long was link'd with yours  
For severance now—you must take life and all,  
If you would see my love.

KING. I'd have thee give me one proof more thou lov'st me.

GRIS. And can you doubt it still?

KING. I have consented to my people's wish,  
Who deprecating my fond choice of thee,  
And wisely choosing for me next themselves,  
Have fix'd on one of birth to marry with me.

GRIS. Then I indeed shall lose my lord for ever—  
He'll be another's now.

KING. What! doth it pain thee?

GRIS. Pain is no pain to me, if 't be your pleasure.  
Consult yourself, nor think what comes of me.  
I knew I was not worthy of your love,  
And you have found it so.

KING. Wouldst thou not wed again?

GRIS. No one can fill your place in my full heart;  
But you did wish to prove my love once more.

KING. Aye, as thou art best custom'd to my palace,  
I'd have thee fit it for my second nuptials;  
And then thou may'st return.

GRIS. You deem too highly of my skill, my lord—  
But it is yours, though you no more are mine.

KING. Farewell then, I bless thee with this kiss.

(Exit.)

GRIS. Such kisses are but bitter blessings now—  
His kindness is but cruelty to me—  
His cruelty but makes me kind to him.  
Patience that turns all evil into good,  
Will teach me to endure my lonely lot.  
Having borne this, I now can bear the worst,  
And feel it best—pain is a pleasure now.

(Scene closes.)



## ACT V.

SCENE 1. *A Room of State.*GRISELDA *and a Servant.*

GRIS. A handmaid in the court where I was queen !  
To serve where I have ruled ! but 'tis his will,—  
My husband's will—oh, no—I'm not his wife,  
I'm but his servant—his meanest slave.  
But who like me can serve him—who so fit ?  
I serv'd him when his queen—and none so well,  
Can know his will—to do it none so willing.  
They come, I would retire—but that I long  
To see his bride, his second, my successor.  
She must be fair to please him, fair and young—  
Since with my youthful bloom, I lost the power,  
And losing that, lost all.

SER. Wounds ! what a good servant our mistress makes—  
There has been much good work lost in her.

*Enter* KING, WINIFRED *veiled*, TREWINE, BIDDULPH, SWANSCOMBE,  
ANSELMO, EDWIN, *and others.*

[GRISELDA *retires to the foot.*]

GRIS. That is the bride !  
May she be all to him, I would have been.

KING. Countess Trewine, you are a stranger here—  
Welcome once more to court.

TRE. I thank your Majesty—I ever loved you ;  
But could not love the thing you made your queen.  
To honour her had been disgrace indeed.  
And you, my lord, were far too good to look for 't.  
Now, my good lord, you have releas'd us all,  
And done yourself the justice to discard her.  
Such self respect entitles you once more,  
To our respect and I am come to pay it,  
To thank you for the honour done our house,  
By marrying our daughter.

GRIS. Is Winifred the bride ?

TRE. Aye wretch ! she was thy maid ; but mistress now.  
How excellent the change ! and Walter made it.  
Vile upstart quean, down to thy task again—  
Keep in thy fitting sphere.

KING. Hear'st thou Griselda ?

GRIS. The Countess knows herself but knows not me.  
I am not what she says, and what I was,  
Your goodness made me, e'en as what I am.

TRE. My lord, will you permit this servile woman,  
To bandy words with me, a Countess!—me  
So soon to be your mother !—bid her hence.

KING. Nay, let her stay to wait on us.

TRE. True, my good lord.

GRIS. How low this Countess ranks herself to me !

KING. Griselda, what thinkest thou of my bride ?

GRIS. That you have flatter'd me by choosing her,  
Or else myself I flatter in the thought.  
But, my good lord, I fain would crave a boon,  
In recompense of all my service past.

KING. What is it ?

GRIS. That you will not assay your present bride,  
With such hard trials as you proved me with.  
Consider, good my lord, her nature's tender,  
And may not bear them, like one poorly born,  
And bred to patience.

KING. I'll see to that—what say you lords ?

SWANS. It glads us much to witness this grand day,  
A day in which the clouds pass from us all,  
For our good king shines forth himself again.

AN. The Church congratulates your majesty,  
And waits to bless your union with its daughter,  
Whose piety doth well deserve this day,  
In honour of her, should be named her own.

KING. Why droops young Edwin ?

TRE. Oh, my good lord, he thinks he'll lose his mistress !  
But you will show him that his fears are groundless.

KING. Most gladly I will do so—hither Edwin,  
Here take this hand—thou see'st 'tis not withheld.

TRE. What means my lord ? you are the bridegroom,  
Or Winifred is no one's bride.

KING. Love has already married them—they wait but this.

ED. O happiness too much for real !

Thus I receive her as a gift from Heaven.

TRE. This is a cruel wrong—Biddulph, dolt ! ass !  
Why stand'st thou stockish there to see this mock ?

BID. Nay you were always much more wise than I,—  
E'en follow your own way.

TRE. Baffled a second time ! undone for ever !  
Swanscombe, Anselmo, will you see this wrong  
And suffer it ?—a page !—I'll to the people.

WIN. Your blessing, mother.

TRE. My curse ! curse on thee !—curse on all !—trick'd thus ?  
Would I were arm'd—there's one should not see this.

I'll league with hell to have my full revenge. (Exit.)

AN. This is a strange proceeding, good my lord.—

SWANS. And most unlook'd for by us :—who's the bride ?

KING. More things may happen that you look not for !  
What noise is that without ?

BID. The people crave an audience of their king.

AN. My lord ! admit them not—stand on your guard—  
They come to murder you in your own palace.

SWANS. Bid us go forth, and with our swords disperse them.

KING. Not so !

I long to hear my people's voice once more.

*Enter BURGESS and others.*

Welcome good Burgess—what hast thou there ?

BUR. 'Tis a petition, please you.

KING. A petition ! you ne'er petition'd me before.

BUR. We ne'er had cause.

AN. Read it not, my lord ; 'tis false, seditious—  
They're rebels, traitors, murderers.

SWANS. Death to their ringleader !

KING. Hold !

Shall I for you make war upon my people ?

What's here ? taxes ! why who hath taxed you ?

BUR. These lords in your high name.

KING. They had not my authority—but see  
'Tis as I fear'd—I warn'd you this would happen.

My private cares have drawn me from the public.

Having once been, this shall not be again.

Forgive me—what would you have done, my people ?

BUR. Dismiss these evil counsellors.

AN. Farewell the Church !

SWANS. Farewell the State !

KING. Aye farewell both of ye—depart, begone—  
Ye shall no more combine against the people.

I banish ye !

AN. The king will not be govern'd,—  
The pope shall lay an interdict.

SWANS. I'll raise an army.

KING. Hence—your she-captain waits you.  
Edwin, thou shall be lord in Swanscombe's stead.

(*Exeunt SWANSCOMBE and ANSELMO.*)



ED. I thank you for my sweet bride's sake.

WIN. I for my Edwin's.

BID. I for both.

BUR. I for the people—you have done us justice.

KING. How can I teach you justice but by doing it?  
Is there one still remains?

*(All eyes turn on GRISELDA.)*

Griselda, hither!

It is enough—thou shalt be tried no more!

Come to my arms—Oh, proof in all extremes!

I took thy child—still there was left thy husband!

I sent thee from me, discrown'd, a beggar home—

But one more trial yet remain'd—the hardest—

To see thy station fill'd—and more than that,

To serve the rival that succeeded thee.

This trial too was thine, nor found thee wanting:

Oh, how shall I repay thee for thy love?

GRIS. You do it now—this moment makes amends  
For all the past—what was my woe to this?

KING. Had all thy trials made one flaw in thee,  
My diamond had been dimm'd—but oh, true jewel!

How thou hast justified my choice of thee.

How few had stood the test I proved thee with!

My kingdom, nay, my life I value not

As I do thee—my true devoted wife!

Sirs, we will feast for many days.

BUR. Long live king Walter and his queen Griselda!

KING. Had I not tried thee, thy worth had not been known.  
Now who shall say thou art not worth my choice?

All shall confess me wise in wedding thee:

Had I not wed thee, I would wed thee now.

My dear Griselda! patientest of women!

Sure all would marry, could they marry such;

Safe in your love, whatever chance might tide.

Thou shalt be loved and honoured as myself.

Our nuptials shall be talk'd of as example.

Earl Biddulph!

Hast thou no gift to grace our second bridal?

BID. I will go seek one.

*(Exit.)*

KING. Go my Griselda, robe thyself again,  
And hither quick return.

*(Exit GRISELDA.)*

What is a man without consistency?  
Consistency's the key-stone of the arch,  
Wanting the which, the temple of our fame  
Disjoints, warps all awry—and labour'd life—  
However lofty in design, falls down,  
A heap of most ignoble ruins.

*Re-enter GRISELDA, robed as queen.*

KING. Here seat thee by our side.  
Know'st thou these?

*Enter GREENBOLE with ALICE, follow'd by BIDDULPH.*

GRIS. My father! and my daughter!  
My darling child, I would have died to see thee!  
And com'st thou back alive! O 'tis complete!

GRISELDA clasps her child—an admiring group closes round—the  
curtain falls.

FINIS.

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